THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

FRANK G. BEARDSLEY, PH.D., S.T.D.

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BY
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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

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TO THE MEMBERS OF
FOUNTAIN PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
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FOREWORD

One of the vital issues now before the religious world is the validity of the miracles of Jesus. Even within circles esteemed orthodox a tendency has developed to ignore or reject the supernatural. Much has been said and written against the miracles of Jesus. This little book has been written in the strong conviction that there are some things which ought to be said in defence of the miracles.

In the last analysis the arguments herein adduced rest upon a belief in the integrity, authenticity, and veracity of the Sacred Scriptures. Upon the basis of competent Christian scholarship it has been taken for granted that the New Testament writings are trustworthy records.

To those whose minds are closed upon this subject there probably is little that can be said, but to those who seriously seek the truth it is hoped that the lines of reasoning which have been followed may prove both helpful and convincing.

FRANK G. BEARDSLEY.

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

CHAPTER I.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

We are living in an age when there is a tendency both within and without theological circles to discredit the miracles and cast a doubt upon the supernatural. In his work on "Religion and Miracle" Dr. George A. Gordon says: "The reality of miracle has been under suspicion among educated minds in all ages. . . . Hitherto the suspicion of the reality of miracle has come from thinkers outside the pale of organized Christianity. . . . The significance of the new question concerning miracle is that it comes from profoundly religious men, and from men living and potent within the Christian Church. . . . Scientific men, in so far as they are under the scientific spirit, see no miracle, that is they note no violations of the order

of cause and effect; they expect to meet with no violations of this order; they believe in none. For them the miracles of all religions are the interesting products of human imagination; they are a chapter in the serious fiction of the world. May a member of the Christian Church, may a preacher of the gospel, in any degree sympathize with the attitude of scientific men toward miracle, and yet remain loyal to his Master? These are questions working to-day in the religious mind wherever that mind has obtained a modern education."

Whatever may be our attitude towards Dr. Gordon's viewpoint, it is evident from the trend of present-day thinking that we must reconsider the miracles, especially the miracles of Jesus, if on no other ground than to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us.

To brush aside the miracles and say that they never were performed is a very summary and seems like a very easy method of ridding ourselves of any difficulties that the miracles may involve. But the denial of the miracles will not rid us of these difficulties. We find that the miracles are recorded by all four

writers of the Gospels. If there were no miracles what explanation can we offer for the presence of the miracles in the Gospel narratives? If we are to deny the miraculous in the life of Jesus must we not for the same reason deny everything that is unique in his life and character? If we accept a part of the record why should we not accept the whole, and if we deny a part of the record why should we not on equal grounds deny the whole? So in the last analysis the denial of the miracles of Jesus brings us back to the more vital and fundamental question, viz: that of Jesus Himself. We must not, we dare not ignore, the question of the miracles. The only way in which we may deal with this question is candidly and squarely to face the miracles of Jesus.

Three principal objections to miracles have been raised: First, they are not possible; second, they are not credible; and third, they are not probable. These objections and the arguments upon which they are founded will be considered in their order.

I. It is argued that miracles are impossible. This is the objection of Hume, who says:

"A miracle is contrary to a law of nature; therefore an over-weighting amount of evidence is required to prove it." The objection of Hume has lost much of its cogency and force with the changed attitude towards God and nature. We no longer look upon God as a *deus ex machina* and the universe as a great mechanism which the Almighty has started going like a gigantic clock which runs itself and with which He never interferes except when something goes wrong. The modern idea is that God is immanent in nature, everywhere present by His Spirit; and that the laws or processes of nature are but the manifestations or expressions of His ceaseless activity.

What have been termed the laws of nature are simply the fixed and uniform processes of nature. Any deviations from them such as miracles, instead of being violations of the laws of nature and therefore contrary to nature, may be but the manifestations of the higher laws of nature. For example we know that it is a law of nature that heat expands and cold contracts. According to that law ice ought to sink in water, but we know that ice does not sink. Is

that contrary to the laws of nature? By no means; it is simply the manifestation of a higher law of nature, viz: the law of crystallization, by which the specific gravity of the frozen particles of water is lessened and they become lighter than the particles of water in the fluid state, so that instead of sinking they rise to the surface of the water.

Man is constantly deviating from the so-called laws of nature. In fact as Lord Kelvin has said, "Every action of the human free-will is a miracle to physical and chemical and mathematical science." It is contrary to the laws of nature for iron to float or for bodies heavier than air to rise above the surface of the earth, and yet gigantic battle-ships ride majestically upon the bosom of the deep, while aeroplanes bird-like gracefully soar thousands of feet above the clouds. This is done through no violation of the laws of nature but by the manifestation of other and higher laws of nature. The same principle holds true of the X-ray, the wireless telegraph and telephone, and a thousand other wonders which have been wrought by man's inventive genius. From the standpoint of the fixed and

uniform processes of nature these are miracles no less truly than the feeding of the five thousand, the stilling of the tempest, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Is man greater than God? If it is possible for man thus to perform miracles is it impossible for God or the Son of God? If God is immanent in nature, if the processes of nature are but the manifestations or expressions of the ceaseless activity of God, there can be no *a priori* assumptions against miracles, which are not contrary to the laws of nature, but are wrought in conformity with the higher laws of nature or the laws of God.

II. While the possibility of miracles is now pretty generally conceded, they are objected to in the second place on the ground that they are not credible. This is the objection of Huxley who says: "If a man tells me he saw a piebald horse in Piccadilly I believe him without hesitation. The thing itself is likely enough, and there is no imaginable motive for his deceiving me. But if the same person tells me he observed a zebra there, I might hesitate a little about accepting his testimony, unless I were well sat-

isfied, not only as to his previous acquaintance with zebras, but as to his powers and opportunities of observation in the present case. If, however, my informant assured me that he beheld a centaur trotting down that famous thoroughfare, I should emphatically decline to credit his statement; and this even if he were the most saintly of men and ready to suffer martyrdom in support of his belief."

Huxley's objection is not well founded for the reason that the wonder to which he alludes would be isolated and unrelated. Isolated and unrelated miracles are always to be received with suspicion. But the miracles of Jesus are not isolated and unrelated. Instead they are related to a great historic character and a great historic movement. In his "Thoughts on Religion," George J. Romanes, the eminent scientist, said: "The antecedent improbability against a miracle being wrought by a man without a moral object is apt to be confused with that of its being done by God with an adequate moral object. The former is immeasurably great; the latter is only equal to that of the theory of theism, i. e., *nil*." It is this precisely

that Huxley leaves out of consideration in his hypothetical miracle of the centaur.

Jesus Christ is the only adequate explanation for the fact of Christianity, and if we deny the miraculous in his life we introduce not only an irrational but an inexplicable element into Christianity itself. As Sanday says: "The truth is that the historian who tries to construct a reasoned picture of the life of Christ finds that he cannot dispense with the miracles. He is confronted with the fact that no sooner had the life of Jesus ended in apparent failure and shame than the great body of Christians—not an individual here and there, but the great mass of the Church—passed over at once to the fixed belief that he was God. . . There must have been something about the Life, a broad and substantial element in it, which *they could recognize* as supernatural and divine—not that we can recognize, but which they could recognize with the ideas of the time. Eliminate miracles from the career of Jesus, and the belief of Christians, from the first moment that we have undoubted contemporary evidence of it (say A. D. 50), becomes an insoluble enigma."

III. The latest argument against miracles is that they are not probable. This is the objection of Dr. George A. Gordon in the book already alluded to, "Religion and Miracle." In his preface he explicitly states: "I have no interest in the destruction of the belief in miracle. I am concerned to show that where miracle has ceased to be regarded as true, Christianity remains in its essence entire; that the fortune of religion is not to be identified with the fortune of miracle; that the message of Jesus Christ to the world is independent of miracle, lives by its own reality and worth, self-evidencing and self-attesting."

Yet later on in his thesis he waives the whole question of miracle when he says: "That I may see for myself, that I may help others to see, that religion is independent of miracle, I accept in a provisional way the denial of miracle as the basis of debate. Miracle is myth; so it is said by a multitude of scholars and thinkers; and we allow the contention to stand. These thinkers assert that natural law rules over all; and we accept the assertion as true." Throughout the book he assumes that miracle is con-

trary to law; but as this objection has been considered already in answering the argument of Hume we now pass it over. He bases his objection to the probability of miracles on the ground that they are unverifiable. In this connection he says:

"History has two sides, one factual, the other ideal. In regard to these two sides of history we ask two distinct and different questions. In regard to the facts we ask: Did they occur? In regard to the ideas we ask: Are they true? The alleged facts of history are of two kinds—natural and miraculous. Even where the alleged facts are natural, scholars are often unable to arrive at an affirmative conclusion respecting them. . . . When the alleged facts are miraculous, the question: Did they occur? is a much harder one. Other questions come in, such as: For what end did they take place? By whom are they attested? Is the attestation that of an eye-witness or tradition? How far were the witnesses and reporters influenced by the general belief in the miraculous? How does this exceptional and limited human experience stand against the solemn general ex-

perience of mankind? Such questions set before one the impossibility of attaining anything like certainty in regard to miracle at its best, —miracle in the evangelical record. It must therefore be placed in the category of the unverifiable. It is not on that account necessarily untrue, but its truth is not open to attestation."

With the ideas of Jesus, he contends that it is otherwise since they are verifiable in human experience. This is of course true, and it is also true that the things which we know by actual experience rest upon a more solid foundation than the knowledge which comes to us in other ways. But are we justified on that account in rejecting all knowledge which cannot be verified in our own experiences? Such a procedure would reduce all history to myth and fiction, for how could we verify in our own experiences the conquests of Alexander the Great, the victory of Charles Martel over the Saracens at Tours, the voyages of Columbus, the defeat of the invincible Spanish Armada, and Napoleon's retreat from Moscow? These are historical facts and as such they rest upon historical evidence. Of what value would our civil

courts be? How could judges and juries verify in their own experiences the murders and thefts and robberies which have been committed? What shall we say of science? Can we verify in our own experience the atomic theory of matter, the Copernican theory of the solar system, or even the law of gravitation? It is true that these may be verified by experiment but not by subjective experience. Such a theory would destroy the bulk of man's mental acquisitions in the past, for in the sum of human knowledge that which comes to a person through his own limited experience is comparatively small. Hence if we were to accept Dr. Gordon's dictum, in a variety of ways we should be left without rudder or compass or sail.

To assume that the miracles of Jesus are improbable, simply because they cannot be verified in human experience, is absurd. There are no inherent improbabilities in the miracles of Jesus. If He was in any sense divine, that is removed out of the category of ordinary men, we should expect the extraordinary in His life. Upon the hypothesis of His divinity, the mir-

acles of Jesus, instead of being improbable, were rather to be expected.

That He should have stilled the storm, changed the water into wine at Cana of Galilee, fed the five thousand in the wilderness, and healed the ills with which men were afflicted is no more strange nor improbable than that God today stills the storms upon the seas, by the alchemy of nature turns water into wine in a thousand vineyards, feeds earth's millions by the operation of the laws of the harvest, and still heals the diseases that flesh is heir to. There is not a physician in all the world who can heal disease. It is God who heals disease. Physicians may administer remedies, but unless these remedies cooperate with the laws of nature, which as we have insisted throughout are the laws of God, the remedies themselves will be unavailing. If my flesh is lacerated, no physician in the world can make it grow together again; he may treat it with antiseptics to keep out infection which would interfere with nature's laws, but it is in accordance with the laws of God that the wound heals. No physician in the world can make broken bones knit together

again. He may set the bones and thus cooperate with God in the work of healing, but it is in conformity with the laws of God that the bones must knit.

In performing his miracles Jesus was simply performing the functions of the sovereign power of God, and if divine this was of course to be expected. There are therefore no inherent improbabilities in the miracles of Jesus.

The question of the miracles cannot be settled *ex cathedra.* The only way in which this problem can be solved is by asking the question What were the facts? This we shall consider in the chapter which follows.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

CHAPTER II.

The Miracles of Jesus (*Continued*)

The possibility, credibility, and probability of the miracles having been established, the next question to be considered is: What reasons have we for believing that Jesus actually performed the miracles which are attributed to Him? In other words what are the facts in the case? If, as is sometimes intimated, it be not necessary to insist upon a belief in the miracles of Jesus as a test of Christian discipleship, nevertheless it is necessary to insist that all the disciples of Jesus shall face the facts concerning His miracles with the utmost candor, and then adjust their beliefs to those facts.

The miracles of Jesus are alleged to be facts and as such they must be placed in the same category as the other alleged facts of history. Their worth or worthlessness is to be determined not by any presuppositions for or against miracles but by the weight of the evidence. Are they or are they not historical? That is the question to be settled in any final conclusion respecting the miracles of Jesus.

The witnesses to the miracles are six or seven in number, all of the New Testament writers, save James and Jude, bearing testimony to one or more of the miracles of Jesus. (a) Were these witnesses competent? While they were not educated men so far as the learning of the schools is concerned, they were by no means illiterate men as their writings clearly show. They were men of ordinary acuteness and sound judgment. Among them or their associates, moreover, were men like Peter and Thomas, who could not easily be deceived. With the exception of Luke and Paul, they were eye-witnesses of the facts which they record. Luke gathered his facts from a variety of sources, and in the main from those who were eye-witnesses. The same may be said of the Apostle Paul, who also had the advantage of studying the facts from the Jewish as well as the Christian standpoint. In any court of justice the competence of such witnesses would never be questioned.

(b) Were these witnesses credible? It is a common rule of evidence accepted by our civil courts, that ordinarily a man will tell the truth

unless he has some motive to do otherwise. These men had no motive to be untruthful. They had nothing to gain thereby. They were preaching unpopular doctrines, for which most of them ultimately gave their lives, and it is utterly inconceivable that men would give their lives in defense of falsehoods. Moreover they are perfectly candid in their statements. They narrate incidents which are not altogether to their credit. They acknowledge their own doubts and their slowness to believe. To those who are acquainted with the nature of evidence, even the alleged discrepancies in their narratives confirm the truthfulness of their declarations with respect to the wonderful works of Jesus. All of these things combine to establish their trustworthiness as witnesses.

With these preliminary observations as to the credibility of the witnesses, let us now consider the evidence. We have the testimony of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, whose narratives contain the story of a great number of miracles wrought by Jesus during the years of his earthly ministry. We have the testimony of Peter in his sermon on

the day of Pentecost when he said, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." We have the testimony also of Peter and Paul to the greatest of all miracles, viz: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We shall however postpone to a subsequent chapter the consideration of the evidence respecting the resurrection of Jesus. While we have no desire to inject into the present discussion a question of Biblical criticism, nevertheless, if the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews be other than the apostle Paul we have his additional testimony. (Cf. Heb. 2:3; 13:20.)

The gospels also record the witness of others to the wonderful works of Jesus. Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night, said: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do the miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him." On the return of Jesus to Nazareth after the commencement of His ministry, the people of the community, His old neighbors and acquaintances who had known Him from

His boyhood, said: "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which hath been given Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?" To the aspersions cast by the Jews upon Jesus, the blind man, whose eyes He had opened, replied: "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing."

Jesus himself pointed to the miracles as the credentials of His divine mission. In speaking of the Baptist, He said: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given to me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." To the Jews who asked whether He was the Christ, He replied: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." When the disciples of John came asking, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to

them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." In passing condemnation upon the cities of Galilee Jesus said "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes .... And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

In his miracles Jesus manifested his lordship over the forces of nature. At the wedding-feast, when the wine gave out, Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and

when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

When the multitudes followed Him into the wilderness he fed them, saying to His disciples, "How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves, and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children."

He stilled the winds and the waves. On one occasion when His disciples had embarked in a ship, while He remained to pray, "He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they sup-

posed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them. Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased."

On another occasion when Jesus was crossing the sea of Galilee with His disciples "there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? and He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

The mentally afflicted Jesus relieved. In that day the lunatic and the madman were turned loose upon society, except sometimes when they were bound with chains. Nothing was done to

care for them or to alleviate their mental distress. Their afflictions were attributed to demoniacal possession. This opinion Jesus did not attempt to correct, but His ability to relieve such unfortunates cannot be doubted. "With authority commanded He even the unclean spirits." Even His enemies recognized His power, but they declared: "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of devils."

Jesus not only relieved the mentally distressed. He healed the sick. Of this we have abundant and sufficient evidence in all four of the Gospels. He cleansed the lepers. He caused the lame to walk. Sight He gave to the blind and hearing to the deaf. On three occasions He brought back the dead to life. Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, besought Jesus to come and heal his daughter, but on the way to the house, one came saying, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, He answered him saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

And all wept, and bewailed her; but He said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway."

As Jesus and his disciples entered the city of Nain, one day, "there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier; and they that bare Him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother."

At Bethany Jesus stood before the grave of Lazarus and said, "Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard Me. And I knew that thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

In all of the miracles which Jesus performed, during the brief years of His earthly ministry, He asserted His lordship over nature, treating its laws and forces as servants, ever subject to His will.

The miracles of Jesus are an integral part of the story of His life. Frequently men say, "We can accept the wonderful teachings of Jesus and the story of His spotless life and character, but we cannot believe the miracles ascribed to Him." In the gospel narratives the miracles of Jesus are so interwoven into the tapestry of His days and deeds that you can-

not wrest them out without rending in pieces the whole fabric of His life. It is simply impossible to cast aside the testimony of the disciples to the wonderful works of Jesus. Either the story of His life, including his miracles, is true, or else it is a gigantic fraud and imposture.

The miracles of Jesus distinguish Him from prophets and apostles. Moses and the prophets of old performed miracles, not through their own power and authority, but in the name of the most high God who had appointed them. Miracles were wrought by the apostles, but always in the name of Jesus. The seventy, whom Jesus had appointed, returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name." To the lame man sitting in the temple, Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The next day, when asked by the authorities, "By what power, or by what name have ye done this?" Peter replied, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you

whole." To Æneas, who had been sick of the palsy eight years, Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." To the young woman possessed of a spirt of divination, Paul said, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."

The miracles of Jesus, differing from those of prophets and apostles, were wrought by His own almighty power. To the leper who worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," Jesus stretched forth His hand and said, "I will; be thou clean." "And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

When Jesus said to the centurion, whose servant was sick, "I will come and heal him," the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Jesus did not disclaim this ascription of power, but turned to His disciples, saying, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith,

no, not in Israel. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it unto thee." It is recorded that "his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

When the storm arose on the sea of Galilee and his disciples were affrighted, Jesus, by His own authority and power, said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." "And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."

Jesus declared that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," but that declaration was linked with the healing of the man afflicted with palsy who was brought to Him on a bed, to whom Jesus in proof of His power to forgive sin, said, "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine own house." And the man straightway arose and departed to his own house.

Jesus affirmed that "the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." The observance of the Sabbath, in the popular estimation of the Jews of that time, was the most sacred requirement of their law. His lordship over the Sabbath, Jesus asserted in His miracles of healing. He was asked concerning the man with the with-

ered hand, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" To which He replied, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days." Then He said to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand." And stretching it forth, his hand was restored like the other.

The miracles of Jesus substantiate the claims which He made concerning Himself as well as those which were made by His disciples concerning Him. Jesus claimed identity with God, saying, "I and the Father are one;" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But Jesus pointed to His miracles as the evidence of this identity, saying, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake."

The disciples looked upon Jesus as God made

manifest in the flesh, the very effulgence of His glory and the express image of His person. They reverenced Him as God. But it was the miracles which He performed which called forth this reverence and worship. At the miraculous draught of fishes Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from Me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." After Jesus had come walking over the troubled waters, and the storm had subsided, "They that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." After the scribes and Pharisees had cast out the man born blind, because he had insisted that Jesus had healed him, the latter found the poor outcast and asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Jesus said, "Thou hast both seen Him and it is He that talketh with thee." And the man said, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him."

After Jesus had left them, He was looked upon by His disciples as having ascended to the Father on high, where as our heavenly and eternal High-Priest He ever liveth to make inter-

cession for us, whence He was to come at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead. But this belief was based upon the miracle of His resurrection from the dead.

The miracles of Jesus shed an interesting light upon His life and character, and reveal His loving sympathy for the needs and helplessness of men. One day a leper came running to Him and beseeching Him said: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus *moved with compassion*, put forth His hand and touched him and said unto him "I will; be thou clean." Once when Jesus had gone into the wilderness and the people had followed Him on foot out of the cities, "Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude, and was *moved with compassion* toward them, and He healed their sick." Of the multitudes who followed Him into the wilderness on another occasion Jesus said: "*I have compassion* on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat." That they might be fed He performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. When Jesus saw the widow of Nain bereft of her only son "*He had compassion* on

her and said unto her, Weep not," and restoring the son to life by the word of His power "He delivered him to his mother."

"He *had compassion* on them," that was the keynote of every miracle which Jesus ever performed. When the Scribes and Pharisees came seeking a sign from Him, Jesus deliberately refused to give them a sign, saying, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, the latter hailed His coming with delight because "he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." But Jesus declined to gratify his curiosity, for He never performed a miracle merely for the sake of the miracle. Every miracle which He wrought was performed to minister to some human suffering or to relieve some human need.

This study of the miracles of Jesus shows that they were so inextricably interwoven with the story of His life and message that if we are to accept at their face value His own words as well as the words of His disciples, we must accept the simple, straightforward accounts of

the wonderful works which were wrought by His hands. There is no alternative. The story of His life and words stands or falls with the story of His wonderful deeds. If human testimony has any value whatsoever, if there is such a thing as historical evidence, we must accept the record of Jesus' deeds as we find that record in the gospels.

THE INCARNATION

CHAPTER III.

THE INCARNATION

Back of the miracles of Jesus was the fact, the stupendous fact, of the Incarnation, God made manifest in the flesh. The Incarnation explains and makes credible all of the wonderful works which were wrought by the hands of Jesus. To some extent this has already been anticipated in the preceding chapters, but it deserves fuller consideration at this time.

Divine, yet human, Jesus entered into all of the experiences of our earthly lot. Though conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of Mary He was born into this world as we all are born. Every step of the path that we must tread He has trodden. His development was a human development. He grew from infancy to youth and from youth to maturity as all others have grown. He early became inured to a life of poverty and toil. His hands were work-worn and calloused by honest toil. He has borne all of the burdens of our earthly life, pri-

vations and hardships, temptation and persecution, pain and weariness, hunger and thirst, suffering and death. His humanity was a real humanity, and yet His life and character were not only unique but divine.

It is simply impossible to place Jesus in the same category with other men. To express His identity with humanity Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Man. But to express His relationship with God, the Father, He alluded to Himself as the Son of God. A study of the life and character of Jesus from the standpoint of His Divine Sonship brings out certain facts which differentiate Him from the rest of mankind.

As the Son of God, Jesus manifested the sinlessness of God. In the realm of moral character he stands alone, unrivalled, supreme. Socrates confessedly was not perfect. Buddha attained to enlightenment only after struggles with sin long protracted. Upon the pages of the Koran we find abundant evidence of the moral unworthiness of Mohammed. Prophets and apostles have confessed their shortcomings and their moral failure. Moses, the great law-

giver, when summoned to become the deliverer of his people, confessed his unworthiness when he said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Isaiah, called to service, exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." At the commencement of his discipleship Simon Peter cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Saint Paul voices man's bondage to sin and evil in these words: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Jesus Christ is the one stainless character of the ages. No taint of sin or guilt ever defiled his soul.

That Jesus was separate from sinners is evident from the fact that in Him was no consciousness of moral lack or failure. So perfect was His fellowship with the Father that He

could say, "I do always those things that please Him." So complete was His sense of victory over temptation that He exultingly said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." To His enemies He gave the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He taught His disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," but He offered no such prayer for Himself. In Him we find no tear of penitence, no prayer for pardon.

Coupled with His sense of sinlessness was the consciousness of His ability to meet the moral needs of others, expressed in such sayings as "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me;" "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Herrmann says, "the fact that Jesus thought of Himself as sinless stands out powerfully before us when we remember what He said and did at the Last Supper with His disciples. In face of a death whose horror He keenly felt, He was able to say that this death He was about to die would take away the burden of guilt from the hearts of those who should remember Him. . . Jesus could not have spoken as He did if He had been conscious of guilt within Himself. In that hour when the conscience of every man who is morally alive inexorably sums up his life, this man could conceive of His own moral strength and purity as that power which alone could conquer the sinner's inmost heart and free him from the deepest need."

The sinlessness of Jesus is corroborated by the testimony of His disciples, not only in the spotless life which is presented in the four gospels, but by statements which refer to Him as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who

knew no sin;" "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

The sinlessness of Jesus is further confirmed by the witness of His enemies. Judas Iscariot, realizing the heinousness of his crime, cried out, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." The only testimony that was adduced against him before the Jewish Sanhedrin was perjured testimony, while the charges brought before the judgment seat of Pontius Pilate were so palpably false that after weighing the evidence, the Roman Procurator declared, "I find no fault in this man." That is the verdict of the ages. For nineteen centuries the search-lights of criticism have been turned full upon the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth without revealing a single moral flaw. As von Ranke has said: "More guiltless and more powerful, more exalted and

more holy, has naught ever been on earth than His conduct, His life and His death; the human race knows nothing that could be brought, even afar off, into comparison with it."

As the Son of God, Jesus manifested the wisdom of God. His message was marvellously clear and simple so that "the common people heard Him gladly." The officers who were sent to arrest Him returned with the statement, "Never man spake like this man." He confuted the wisest teachers of His time, and when in succesion He had discomfited and silenced the Herodians, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, it was recorded, "Neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." His teachings, He declared, should endure for all time, saying, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." At the commencement of His ministry it was said "the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." His teachings He placed, not on a level with the law and the prophets, but above the law and the prophets. The scribes and teachers of His

time were constantly referring to the law and the traditions of the elders, saying, "It is written;" "It is said;" but Jesus, setting aside their interpretations, declared, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you," and then He would proceed to let in such a flood of light upon some old passage or teaching as to give it an entirely new significance and meaning. The teachings of the law, He summarized into two simple statements, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Nowhere in all literature, past or present, can we find so clear, so concise, and yet so comprehensive a setting forth of the life of human duty, as that which is contained in that simple yet impressive document known as the Sermon on the Mount.

In His teachings He reversed the common conceptions of his countrymen. They looked for a Messiah who should reign as an earthly

king and bring all nations under his sway. Instead of sitting upon a royal throne Jesus taught that the Son of Man must suffer humiliation and sorrow and death. Through His death those forces were to be awakened which should revolutionize humanity and redeem the world. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "And I, if be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." His kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom "not of this world." In that kingdom service and not authority should govern. "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many."

He gave to the world a new conception of God. There are glimpses of the nearness and

fatherhood of God in the Old Testament, but the usual picture is that of a God afar off, a sovereign king, whose throne was in the highest heavens, and who was surrounded by a wall of fire and smoke. No man could look upon the face of God and live. But Jesus always interprets God in terms of His divine fatherhood, speaking of Him as "My Father" and "your Father" and "our Father." In a single parable, the parable of the Prodigal Son, He gives to us a truer picture of the yearning and suffering love of God than is found in all the law and the prophets. All that an earthly father is to us, God is and more. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." The conception which Jesus gives to us of God, the universal mind instinctively recognizes as true.

All that we know of the future life is contained in the words of Jesus. Although constantly assuming the fact of the future life, the Old Testament says comparatively little about it. Like a breath of heavenly music the thought

of the future life runs through all of the teachings of Jesus. The patriarchs of old, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, had not passed into a dreamless sleep but were alive, because "God was not the God of the dead but of the living." He declared himself to be the author of everlasting life, saying, "Everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The life to come, He affirmed to be a continuation of the life that now is: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." For the larger and fuller life that stretches out beyond the grave, men were to make preparation here and now: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The rewards for service would continue into eternity: "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the

world to come life everlasting." Jesus looked forward to receiving His disciples into the fellowship of that nobler and higher existence, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." If the words of Jesus relative to the future life were to be blotted out, there would be very little left for us to cling to, since all of the utterances of the apostles derive their strength and support from the words of Jesus.

As the Son of God, Jesus manifested the patience of God. Without murmuring He endured all of the trials and tribulations of His earthly lot. He was unmoved by the scoffs and scorns of men. With consummate tact and skill He dealt with the want of understanding on the part of His disciples and their slowness of heart to believe. There was but one thing which could move him to indignation and that was the wicked perversity of men. He over-

turned the seats of the money changers and cast out of the temple those that bought and sold doves, saying, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves." The woes which He pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees for their baseness, hypocrisy, and shameless insincerity furnish added evidence of the strength of His moral purpose, for a character which was incapable of moral indignation assuredly could not be perfect. Injustice towards Himself Jesus met with unfailing gentleness, meekness and forbearance, but injustice towards others stirred Him to the depths of His being. The instances recorded in the gospels of the occasions when He was moved to indignation awaken our moral approbation rather than otherwise, for a patience which under such circumstances could be blind and dumb would not reflect the patience of God.

The storm clouds gathered thick and fast about Him, but with unfaltering purpose He pursued His onward way, knowing that He must tread at last the *via dolorosa*, the bitter path of tears, that led to Calvary and death.

The shadows of night closed in about Him, but they did not swerve Him from His course. We have no more impressive example of a patience that was divine than that which He manifested amidst the experiences through which he passed during His passion in the Garden of Gethsemane.

At a time when He most felt the need for human sympathy and friendship He said to His disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." Having so spoken He went a little farther and prayed, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Disobedient to His injunction and overcome by physical exhaustion, the disciples succumbed to sleep. When He found them thus, not in anger but in pained surprise He asked, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" We can well imagine the words of stinging rebuke which such conduct would have called forth from some earthly ruler, but not one word of condemnation or reproof did Jesus utter, and when His disciples had no explanation to offer in extenuation of their negligence,

see how He excuses them, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." When a second and a third time they had fallen asleep He said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Again we witness that same God-like patience, when friendless and alone He stood before the judgment seat of Pontius Pilate. Though "He was reviled, He reviled not again." Contrast His attitude, calm and self-composed, with the relentless hate of the angry multitude as they cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him!" Surely "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Behold Him as they strip His raiment from Him, placing a purple robe upon him and placing upon his brows a crown of thorns, while amidst mocking laughter and ribald oaths they hail Him as a king! Witness the repeated indignities to which He was subjected and the cruel scourging which He suffered at the hands of His persecutors. Yet with unwearying patience He endures it all and under the weight of

His own cross staggers away towards the tragic spot on Golgotha where He is to offer up Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

As the Son of God, Jesus manifested the love of God. In His teachings, as we have already seen, Jesus unfolded the idea of God as a loving, compassionate heavenly father who sympathizes with human weakness and sorrows over human sins. As a man, entering into loving, helpful, sympathetic human relationships, Jesus revealed the very heart and character of God. The whole purpose of His life expresses itself in the pouring out of His soul for the good of others and in His ceaseless activity to bring men, all men, into fellowship and communion with the Father. The friend of publicans and sinners, He gave Himself without reserve to the lowly, the suffering and the sinful. His was a love which knew no bounds. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That was the highest type of love that the world had ever known. Jesus of Nazareth, however, laid down His life not only for His friends, but for His enemies and persecutors, for those who mocked, despised, and

hated Him. Amidst the agonies of His dying hour, unmindful of His own sufferings and thinking only of the blindness of His foes and tormentors, He looked heavenward and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Contrasting the death of Socrates, the Athenian philosopher, with the tragedy on Calvary, Rosseau said, "If Socrates died like a philosopher, Christ died like a God."

The cross of Christ reveals a love which goes all lengths and withholds nothing that sinning men may be reconciled to God. It is not enough to tell men that God loves them. Sin has so alienated and estranged their hearts that the mere declaration of God's forgiving love is not in itself sufficiently convincing. But no one looking to the cross of Calvary can for one moment doubt God's willingness to receive and forgive His erring children. So throughout all ages, men and women storm-tossed upon the sea of life, battling against the billows of temptation and sin, struggling in the darkness of doubt and despair, have looked to the crucified Redeemer as the rock of their deliverance and in Him they have found peace.

How shall we account for the wonderful Teacher of Nazareth? What explanation shall we offer for Him who manifested the love, the patience, the wisdom, and the sinlessness of God? The disciples, who for three years had sat at His feet, had drunk in His words, and had felt the power of His matchless personality, believed Him to be the divine Son of God. They worshipped Him as God. Prayers were offered in His name. They looked upon Him as exalted to the right hand of God, the Father, on high, where as our heavenly and eternal High Priest He ever liveth to make intercession for men, whence He was to come at the end of all things, to judge the quick and the dead, and to receive into everlasting life all who had believed in His name. Through His name alone salvation was to be obtained. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The men who held these beliefs were Jewish monotheists, steeped in all of the prejudices of their race, with the firm conviction that Jehovah, their God, was supreme, and yet so fully convinced were they that Jesus was not only divine but co-equal with

God, that they were willing to lay down their lives in His name, not counting their lives dear unto themselves.

In the light of all the facts this is the only logical conclusion to which we can come. There is but one hypothesis upon which we can account for the unique life and character of Jesus, and that is that He was the divine Son of God.

We cannot account for the character of Jesus upon the basis of heredity. There is truth in the old adage that "blood will tell." But this affords no adequate explanation for the wonderful life of Jesus. It is true that He was of the house and lineage of David. But many generations intervened between David and Jesus without a distinguished representative of that family. The mother of Jesus seems to have been a remarkable woman. Yet there is nothing about Mary which will account for her wonderful Son. She was the mother of other children, who seem to have been common-place individuals, possessed of none of the remarkable qualities of Jesus. His fellow-townsmen felt that there was nothing in the family from which He came that would account for the wonderful

words and works of Jesus, for they said, "From whence hath this Man these things? and what wisdom is this which hath been given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?"

We cannot account for Jesus on the basis of His education or environment. He may have attended the village school at Nazareth, but His parents were too poor to send Him to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Gamaliel or any of the other great teachers of His time. If he had attended the village school, His education was interrupted at a very early age and He was obliged to enter the shop of Joseph to learn the carpenter's trade at which He worked for a number of years in and about Nazareth, so that the people of His time asked, "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" His teachings, to be sure, were colored by His environment, for He alludes to the birds of the air, the gorgeous coloring of the lilies of the field, and to the customs of His time, but there

was nothing about the obscure village of Nazareth, where He was reared and in which He spent His youth and early manhood, to produce real greatness of character. Indeed in contempt it was asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

We cannot account for the character of Jesus by the race from which He sprang. He was indeed the child of a great race, a race which in the past produced a Moses, a David, an Elijah, an Isaiah, and an Ezekiel, a race, moreover, which in subsequent times has produced a Ricardo, a Disraeli, a Mendelssohn, a Heine, and a Spinoza. Other great characters may be classified by the race or nation to which they have belonged. Confucius was a Chinaman, Socrates was a Greek, Cæsar was a Roman, Cromwell and Gladstone were Englishmen, Richelieu and Voltaire were French, Goethe and Bismarck were Germans, Washington and Lincoln were Americans, but Jesus Christ belongs to no race or country, for He alone is the universal Man. The Jews of His time were narrow, exclusive and intolerant. They thought much of a kingdom but it was a kingdom of

this world, a kingdom for themselves. They alone of all mankind were the chosen people of God. Upon all others they looked with unmixed contempt. Their religion was one of imposing pomp and ceremonial, while they perceived but dimly, if at all, the spirituality of worship. They made great pretensions to righteousness, but it was an outward form of righteousness rather than that of the heart. Jesus of Nazareth was as far removed from the narrowness and exclusiveness of His race as a man well could be; hence the impossibility of accounting for His life and teachings by the race from which He sprang.

We cannot account for Jesus Christ by the age in which He lived. He is the Man of the ages. Most men are the children of their time. Martin Luther may have had qualities which in any age would have attracted attention, but at no other period of human history could he have been the great reformer that he was. We cannot conceive of Washington in any age as being other than a great and good man, but in no other age could he have been the Father of his country. Had Abraham Lincoln lived a

hundred years before he did, his name never would have gone down into history as the preserver of his country and the emancipator of millions. Jesus Christ was not the product of the age in which he lived. It was a cruel and merciless age. Licentiousness ran riot. Infanticide was common. In the arena armed gladiators fought one another to the death or amidst the plaudits of the spectators were torn from limb to limb by wild beasts made ravenous by hunger. Crimes of violence were frequent. Cicero was murdered. Julius Cæsar met death at the hands of his friends. Herod, who ruled at Jerusalem, caused his wife, Mariamne, and his two sons to be murdered, slaughtered the innocents of Bethlehem, and dying commanded that his nobles should be executed that the mourning at his death might be wide-spread. The cruel and blood-thirsty Nero was more truly the representative of that period than the meek and lowly Galilean. Whatever else He was, Jesus of Nazareth was not the product of the age in which He lived.

We cannot account for the character of Jesus upon the hypothesis of evolution. If his

character was in any sense the product of evolution, then we might expect those same evolutionary processes to bring forth like results in the lives of others. But in the realm of moral character Jesus Christ has had neither rival nor equal. He stands absolutely alone. It is impossible to place Him in the same category with other men. There is no saint, no prophet, no philosopher, no poet, no statesman, no hero, no reformer with whom to compare Him. Throughout the ages there has been absolutely no other who could say as He said, "Follow Me:" "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

There is but one hypothesis upon which we can account for the unique life and character of Jesus, and that is that He is the divine Son of God, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." If Jesus Christ be not divine, then He is the insoluble enigma of the ages. Upon no possible basis can we account for the life of Jesus of Nazareth as that of an ordinary man. The story of the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection, as that story is unfolded in the Gospels, is thoroughly

consistent and harmonious. His words and His works dovetail together. When examined without bias or prejudice, the evidence leads irresistibly to the belief that Jesus was "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Accepting the hypothesis of His divinity the miracles ascribed to Jesus at once become credible. "If God is possible, miracle is possible." That is the inevitable and inescapable conclusion to which the premise of Theism drives us. He who came from God, indeed was God made manifest in the flesh, could turn water into wine, could still the winds and the sea, could feed the five thousand with a few loaves and some small fishes, could heal the sick, alleviate the demented, cleanse the leper, and bring back to life again them that were dead.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

CHAPTER IV.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Special attention must be given to the Virgin birth of Jesus since the assaults upon the miraculous are often concentrated against this miracle. There are those who declare that the doctrine of the Virgin birth in no way affects the credibility of Christianity, that it is a hindrance rather than otherwise to Christian faith, because it places the birth of Jesus on a level with the myths current in the ancient world asserting the supernatural births of other celebrated personages. Any consideration of the miracles connected with the life of Jesus must, therefore, include an examination into the credibility of this miracle.

A distinction, no doubt, is to be made between the fact of the Virgin birth and the validity of that fact for religious faith. There may be, and doubtless are, many professing Christians who have given little or no thought to the doctrine of the Virgin birth and who are devoted

followers of Jesus, entirely apart from that doctrine. To argue on that account that the Virgin birth is unimportant and therefore a non-essential is fallacious. Our estimate of the Divine yet human Christ is based upon the facts recorded in the four gospels. These are our only sources of knowledge concerning His life. If our estimate of the person of Jesus is to be accurate, not one of these facts may be omitted or ignored. No exception is to be made to the Virgin birth. Its implications are too important and too far-reaching for such evasion. This fact we should face with the same candor and honesty as we face all other facts in the life of Jesus.

Believing in the deity of Jesus we could hardly escape a presupposition in favor of His supernatural birth. If Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God it was to be expected that His birth as well as His life would differ from that of all other men. Under the old apologetic it was customary to establish our Lord's divine nature by His supernatural birth. Let us reverse the process. Instead of saying that the Virgin birth proves the divine life, let us say

that His divine life makes credible His supernatural birth. A unique life necessitates a unique birth. The uniqueness of Jesus' life establishes His divine character, and accepting His divine character, His miraculous birth not only becomes credible but necessary.

Speaking of the relation of the Virgin birth to the Incarnation, Dr. Charles Briggs said: "The philosophical difficulties which beset the doctrine of the Virgin Birth do not concern the Virgin Birth in particular, but the Incarnation in general. Indeed, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth seems to be the only way of overcoming the chief difficulties. If the pre-existent Son of God became incarnate by ordinary generation, we could not escape the conclusion that a human individual person was begotten. The Incarnation would then not be a real Incarnation, but an inhabitation of Jesus by the Son of God, with two distinct personalities, that of the pre-existent Son of God and that of the begotten son of Joseph. . . . The man Jesus would be a prophet, a hero, a great exemplar, but not the Saviour of mankind. He might be the last and greatest of the heroes of the Faith, but

not God Incarnate. Only a God-man who had taken human nature into organic union with Himself and so identified Himself with the human race as to become the common man, the second Adam, the head of the race, could redeem the race. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth gives such a God-man. Natural generations could not possibly give us such a God-man. Therefore, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential to the integrity of the Incarnation, as the Incarnation is to the doctrine of Christ and Christian Salvation."

Accepting then, upon the basis of His unique life and character, the fact of the Incarnation, that Jesus was God made manifest in the flesh, it was not merely to be expected, but, as has already been intimated, necessary that His birth should differ from that of all other men. The New Testament contains two accounts of the birth of Jesus. The first of these, the briefer account in Matthew's gospel, tells us that before the nuptials had been celebrated, Mary, the espoused wife of Joseph "Was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Supposing that she had been untrue to her betrothal vows, "Joseph, her

husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." While he was meditating on these things "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." This, Matthew declared to be a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us."

Luke gives us a much fuller account, telling of the visit of the Angel Gabriel who came to Mary saying, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Mary was greatly disturbed by this salutation, but the angel reassured her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt

call His name JESUS, He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Mary asked the very natural question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" But the angel replied, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." On a visit to her counsin Elizabeth, Mary expressed her exultation in the Magnificat:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is His name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him

From generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy.
As He spake to our fathers.
To Abraham, and to his seed forever."

Although these two stories of the conception of Jesus differ in minor details, thus indicating that they are independent accounts, nevertheless they supplement each other and both are agreed that the birth of Jesus was the direct result, without human intervention, of the action of the Holy Spirit upon the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Exception is taken to the Virgin birth of Jesus on the ground that it is biologically impossible. Because a thing is inexplicable it is not necessarily impossible. "With God all

things are possible." The late Prof. Huxley wrote, "The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of Nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is not more puzzling than the necessary antinomies of physical speculation; virgin procreation and resuscitation from apparent death are ordinary phenomena for the naturalist."

Life is a mystery which to the human understanding is inexplicable. Who can explain the mystery of the tiniest blossoms that dot the hill-side? How is it that generation after generation the different plants and creatures go on reproducing after their kind? We are familiar with the processes of life, but back of these is the inexplicable mystery of life. The supreme mystery, of course, was the creation of life in the first instance. God is the author of life. Can the Creator be less than His creatures? If He has endowed beings with the power of transmitting the germ of life to other beings like unto themselves, by the natural processes of generation, is it not reasonable to suppose that the Great Author of life can implant the germ of life in one of His own crea-

tures? From a biological standpoint, in the last analysis, there can be no inherent impossibility in the Virgin birth of Jesus, since He who breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life certainly had the power without human intervention to implant within the womb of Mary the spirit of the pre-existent Christ in order that the Word might be made flesh.

Exception to the Virgin birth is taken on the ground that a supernatural origin was attributed to other notable persons of antiquity such as Plato, the philosopher, and such rulers as Alexander the Great and Augustus Cæsar. Because spurious coins sometimes get into circulation that is no reason why we should discard the perfectly good pieces of money that pass from hand to hand. That would be a preposterous proceeding. The only wise course to pursue is to discriminate between the false and the true. The same principle applies here. The fact that any number of persons were alleged to be supernaturally born would not in itself militate against the Virgin birth of Jesus. However, there is absolutely no analogy between the gospel account of the birth of Jesus and the

fabulous stories, invented with the intent to flatter, that Plato was the son of Apollo, Alexander of Zeus, and Augustus of Apollo. There is not the slightest suggestion of a virgin birth in the case of any of these men, who are coarsely described as offspring from the illicit intercourse between the gods and their mothers. The attempt to place the chaste and sublimely beautiful account of the conception of Jesus, as found in the gospel records, on a level with stories so crude and gross, savors not only of the absurd but of the blasphemous.

Exception to the Virgin birth of Jesus is taken on scriptural grounds. In the gospels Jesus is referred to as follows: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Is not this Joseph's Son?" "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." At the age of twelve Jesus accompanied his parents to Jerusalem and, fascinated by the things which he saw and heard, lingered behind after they had started on their homeward journey, but "Joseph and Mary knew not of it." When they found Him in the temple after three days' searching, His mother said, "Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Behold thy father

and I have sought thee sorrowing." Upon the basis of these passages it is argued that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph. But with a single exception these passages are found in the gospels of Luke and Matthew which tell the story of the Virgin birth. That the particulars of His birth were not widely published is evident from the statement, "but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." Being reared in the home of Joseph and Mary, why should those, who had no intimate knowledge of the facts, think of Jesus as other than the son of Joseph? In Luke's gospel we have a statement which sheds a flood of light upon this matter, "And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph." Such being the supposition, why should not Jesus be referred to as the son of Joseph? This is a perfectly logical and natural explanation of the passages referred to and shows that they do not in any wise contradict the idea of the Virgin birth.

Further objection to the Virgin birth is offered on the ground that the narratives of the miraculous conception of Jesus, incorporated

in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke, are interpolations or additions made to the original documents by later writers. But when such objectors are confronted by the fact that all of the earliest manuscripts, without exception, contain these narratives, the argument is advanced that they are untrustworthy and therefore to be rejected because of the silence of Mark, John, and Saint Paul upon this subject. Supposing we were to adopt the same principle with reference to all of the facts in the life of our Saviour and should accept those only which were recorded in all four of the gospels and the writings of Saint Paul, what would happen? We should be obliged to reject the story of the temptation of Jesus; the Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Golden Rule; many of the great parables of Jesus, including the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. We should be obliged to reject the interview with Nicodemus, including that wonderful declaration, the most wonderful in the Bible, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We should be obliged to reject the conversation with the woman of Samaria, including the pronouncement, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We should be obliged to reject those words of Jesus, which throughout all ages have brought comfort to multitudes of sorrowing hearts, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." We should have a sadly mutilated New Testament, if we were to insist that everything be rejected except what was found in every one of the four gospels and the epistles of Saint Paul.

Let us analyze the alleged silences of Mark, John, and Saint Paul. The gospel of Mark

contains no reference at all to the birth of Jesus. Are we justified on that account in denying that Jesus ever was born? The sort of logic which would deny the Virgin birth of Jesus because no mention was made of it might with equal reason deny the fact that Jesus ever was born. Such an argument deserves no serious consideration. But if the gospel of Mark makes no mention of the Virgin birth it assumes the divine paternity of Jesus. Mark commences his narrative with the impressive statement, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Saint John, the evangelist, is equally emphatic in assuming the divine origin of Jesus. In the opening chapter of his gospel he says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

In telling the story of the first miracle, that at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, John says, "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That is a statement pregnant with meaning, implying as it does that in the consciousness or subconsciousness of Mary was the memory of those wonderful happenings at the birth of Jesus which led her to believe that in entering upon His ministry wonderful things would be wrought by His hands.

These passages in John's gospel certainly are not at variance with the statements in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke describing the Virgin birth, but, to borrow an expression from Paley, are what might be termed "undesigned coincidences" to corroborate that fact.

To say that the Apostle Paul knew nothing about the Virgin birth of Jesus expresses it rather strongly to say the least. The argument from silence is an argument that works both ways. If Saint Paul said nothing in favor of the Virgin birth, he certainly said nothing against it. In fact so far as the inferences from his writings are concerned, they favor rather than oppose the doctrine of the Virgin birth. In his Epistle to the Galatians, he says, "But when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." It would have been just as easy and at the same time perfectly natural for the great apostle to have said that Jesus was the child of Jewish parents and therefore born under the law, the very point that he was trying to make. But again this "undesigned coincidence" in reality confirms and corroborates the Virgin birth.

If Saint Paul's wonderful description of the humiliation of Jesus in his epistle to the Philippians does not suggest an acquaintance with the Virgin birth, it assuredly is as strong a statement of the divine origin of Jesus as could be asked: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name."

It must be remembered that Paul was no biographer. He wrote no account of the earthly life of Jesus. Aside from the death and resurrection of Jesus, which were central to his thinking, he makes no mention of any of the facts connected with the life of Jesus. However, Luke was the friend and companion of Paul. His gospel must have been written during the life-time of the apostle, because it was written before the book of Acts, and if Saint

Paul was not living when the latter came from the hands of Luke some mention doubtless would have been made of His death. If Paul had not read the gospel of Luke he must have been acquainted with the essential facts contained in it, including the story of the birth of Jesus which Luke described so fully and so explicitly. It is incredible that that story should have been incorporated into Luke's gospel, if Saint Paul, with whom he had been so intimately asosciated, should have challenged or discredited the Virgin birth of Jesus.

The alleged silences of Mark, John, and Saint Paul are not at all conclusive. To say that they afford sufficient ground for rejecting the Virgin birth of Jesus strains one's credulity beyond the breaking point. The story of the divine conception of the Redeemer of men, contained in the earliest manuscripts and versions of the New Testament, is an integral part of the gospel record and cannot be rejected without rejecting the whole testimony of the gospels. Regardless of its bearing upon faith, the question of the Virgin birth is a question of fact, and as such it stands or falls with the other

facts recorded in the New Testament writings. There is not a scintilla of evidence in these writings for rejecting this fact which corroborates and substantiates the evidence adduced by the apostles and the claims of Jesus Himself that He was "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

CHAPTER V.

The Resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning miracle of Christianity. Of all the miracles connected with the life of Jesus, this is the best authenticated. All of the apostolic witnesses to the miracles allude to the resurrection and dwell at length upon it.

Late on the afternoon of the crucifixion, the bruised and mangled body of Jesus, having been taken down from the cross, was laid away in the new-made sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea and a huge stone was rolled before the mouth of it. On the morning of the third day, when the women went with the purpose of anointing and embalming the body, the stone was found rolled away and the sepulchre empty. His disciples believed and declared that Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them on numerous occasions in person. Since this was an event which happened many centuries ago, upon what grounds do we today base our belief

in the resurrection of Jesus? Let us introduce the witnesses, examine the facts, and weigh the evidence.

The first witness whom we shall put upon the stand is the Apostle Paul. He was a highly educated man, a pupil of Gamaliel, one of the most celebrated Jewish teachers of his time. From being a most bitter opponent of Christianity he was converted and became a zealous apostle of the new faith, founding numerous churches in Asia Minor and Europe.

The earliest and most carefully arranged statement of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is found in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. This is one of the oldest documents in the New Testament and by competent Christian scholarship is believed to have been written before any of the four gospels. When Paul wrote this epistle he was nearly as close, in point of time, to the resurrection of Jesus as we are today to the assassination of President McKinley or the death of Queen Victoria. In this chapter he states:

1. That Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

2. That after his resurrection he appeared to Peter.

3. That he appeared to James.

4. That he appeared to the twelve.

5. That on one occasion he appeared to as many as five hundred of the brethren, some of whom had since died, but the majority of whom were still living at the time of his writing and could testify to the facts.

6. That last of all he appeared to Paul "as of one born out of due time."

7. That the resurrection of Jesus was preached by all the apostles, and was not questioned among Christians of that time. There seemed to be some doubt as to a general resurrection after death, but not to that of Jesus Christ.

There is a curious if not a remarkable omission in the chain of evidence which the apostle presents, viz: he makes no mention of the appearance of Jesus to the women on the morning

of the resurrection. There is no reason to suppose that Paul intended to discredit their account, but he was an old bachelor with an old bachelor's prejudices against womanhood in general and probably felt that their testimony did not add to his argument in favor of the resurrection and for that reason omitted it as of no importance.

Aside from this curious omission the Apostle Paul presents a remarkable summary of the evidence in support of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. So sure was he of the facts that he could say, "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen

from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

The next witness whom we shall introduce is Saint Luke. He was not an eye-witness, but he had access to many who were. As a historian he was careful, accurate and painstaking. This is brought out by the fact that in his writings he frequently mentions persons, places and local customs. So far as secular history and the researches of archæology have shed any light upon these matters they show that in not a single point has he been found to be in error. In his gospel he gives a detailed account of the resurrection of Jesus and speaks of numerous appearances to His disciples, while in the book of Acts this careful and painstaking historian says that to the apostles whom he had chosen Jesus "showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

The third witness whom we shall summon is Saint Peter, an eye-witness and chiefest among the apostles. He wrote no gospel and has given

no detailed account of the resurrection, but in the book of Acts we have an extended report of the sermon which he preached on the day of Pentecost, just seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In that sermon he said:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou with not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy

with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

To whom were these words spoken? To the people in the city of Jerusalem, just outside of which Jesus had been crucified and buried. The facts were right at hand, and if contradiction ever was possible it was then and there. Yet Peter boldly affirmed the resurrection of Jesus as a fact which could not be disputed. In all of the accounts which we have of the subsequent preaching of Peter, as well as in his first Epistle, this same fact stands out with unusual prominence.

Matthew, Mark and John all were eye-witnesses and in their gospels they give detailed ac-

counts of the facts connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus, describing the tomb, the visit of the women on the first day of the week with the purpose of annointing and embalming the body of Jesus, the incredulity and disbelief of the disciples when first informed that Jesus had risen from the dead, the various appearances of Jesus—how He talked with them, walked with them, ate with them—showing them His nail-pierced hands and feet, together with his wounded side, all of which convinced these men that they had seen, not a spirit nor a vision, but Jesus Himself, who had triumphed over death and the grave.

In any court of justice two unimpeachable witnesses are sufficient to establish a case. Here we have the testimony of six competent and credible witnesses, four of whom were eye-witnesses of the facts to which they testify, and the other two were men of unusual ability who had access to all of the facts, and yet upon the basis of these facts they asserted in the positive and uncompromising terms that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Not only do we have the direct and unequiv-

ocal statements of the apostles themselves witnessing to the fact of the resurrection, but certain things are explicable only upon the basis of this fact. How shall we account for Christianity itself? For nineteen centuries this religion has been a vital force in the world's life and history. It has exalted womanhood, it has honored childhood and has promoted popular education. It has abolished slavery and has fostered free governments upon the earth. It has kindled the fires of genius, has inspired the poet and the painter, has ennobled the task of the statesman and the reformer, and has enriched in a thousand ways the entire life of humanity. What has been the fundamental doctrine of Christianity? The central and fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith has been that of a crucified and resurrected Redeemer. This is the foundation stone upon which the whole superstructure rests. It was upon the basis of a belief in the doctrine that the triumphs of the early Church were won. The disciples were persecuted. They were scourged and imprisoned. They were put to death. Yet the belief persisted. If the men of that day

had been able to prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead, they would have done so and Christianity would have passed forever out of existence. But Christianity and the church still live, triumphant witnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus.

How shall we account for the Christian Sabbath? Christianity originated among the Jews, and yet our Sabbath is not the Jewish Sabbath. They worshipped on the seventh day of the week, while we worship on the first day. How did this change occur? It is sometimes said that Constantine the Great changed the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. Constantine, however, did not change the day. As the first Christian emperor, he simply gave legal sanction to the observance of the first day of the week, which had long been established by Christian practice and custom.

From the very outset the Christians observed the first day of the week. Of this several instances are recorded in the New Testament. In fact there is not a single instance in the New Testament where the Christians met for worship on the seventh day of the week after the resur-

rection of Jesus from the dead. Instances are recorded where the Apostle Paul and others went to the Jewish synagogues on the seventh day of the week, but they did so because the Jews were accustomed to meet on that day, and that, therefore, they might have opportunity to preach the gospel to the Jews there assembled, but in no instance did the Christians meet for worship on that day. They invariably met on the first day of the week.

How did this change come about? It is not easy to change a day that has been established by age-long custom. The explanation for this change is found in the fact that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, and from that day to this, in commemoration of that fact, Christians have met upon the first day of the week. Crystallized into a custom that has persisted for nineteen centuries, the observance of the first day of the week constitutes an irrefragable argument in favor of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Having considered the evidence in favor of the resurrection of Jesus, let us consider the counter testimony, if such there be, against the

resurrection. What facts can be adduced to prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead? There is no evidence to disprove the resurrection, but certain objections have been raised against it and sundry attempts have been made to explain it away.

It has been alleged that Jesus did not rise from the dead, but that his disciples came by night to the sepulchre and removed the body, after which they circulated the falsehood that he had risen from the dead. This overlooks the precautions which were taken to prevent any attempts of such a character. After the crucifixion the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." Pilate readily granted their request, saying, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can." So the sepulchre was sealed, making it secure, and the watch was set to see

that the grave was unmolested. Had they been so disposed, what could that little band of feeble disciples, who had fled so precipitately from the mob in the garden of Gethsemane, hope to accomplish against a guard of veteran Roman soldiers? Who among their number would venture to propose so hazardous an undertaking? No person can approach the New Testament records of the resurrection with an unbiased mind and give a moment's credence to the idea that the disciples could have been guilty of so gigantic a fraud and piece of deception.

It is asserted that Jesus did not die upon the cross, but merely swooned or fainted away, after which His friends worked over Him and brought Him back to life, so that instead of a resurrection there was simply a resuscitation. In support of this theory we are referred to an account given in the life of Josephus of the crucifixion of a number of captives, three of whom he recognized as his acquaintances. At Josephus' request they were taken down from the cross and given every medical attention for their recovery, notwithstanding which two of the three died. There is, however, no parallel between this case

and that of Jesus of Nazareth. These three men were taken down from the cross while evidently alive, but in Jesus' case he was to all appearances dead when he was removed from the cross. It was customary for the Romans, after crucifying malefactors, when they took them down from the cross, to strike their limbs with a heavy mallet, breaking their limbs and making death certain if it had not taken place already. But when Jesus and the two thieves, who were crucified with Him, were taken down, the legs of the latter were broken by the soldiers, who seeing that Jesus was dead already "brake not his legs." Nevertheless, one of the Roman soldiers thrust his hasta or spear into Jesus' side, piercing the lungs and pericardium, thus making death certain, if it had not already taken place. Pontius Pilate, moreover, refused permission for the burial of Jesus without a positive statement from the centurion that death had actually taken place.

Strauss, who rejects the resurrection, says of this theory, "One who crept forth from his grave half dead . . could not possibly make upon the disciples the impression of the Victor over

death, the Prince of life, which lay at the source of their later activity. Such a coming to life could but have weakened the impression he made upon them in life and death . . . It could not possibly have transformed their sorrow into enthusiasm, their reverence into worship."

Keim is equally emphatic in his rejection of this theory, saying, "Then there is the most impossible thing of all: the poor, weak, sick Jesus, with difficulty holding Himself erect, in hiding, disguised, and finally dying—this Jesus an object of faith, or exalted emotion, of the triumph of his adherents, a risen conqueror and Son of God! Here, in fact, the theory begins to grow paltry, absurd, worthy only of rejection, since it makes the apostles either miserable victims of deceit, or, with Jesus, themselves deceivers."

Jurists tell us that the simplest explanation is the truest. It is a great deal easier to accept the simple, straightforward accounts of the death of Jesus as these are given in the four gospels than it is to believe the labored attempts to explain away the facts of His death.

There are those who admit the death of Jesus but who deny the reality of His resurrection and seek in various ways to explain it away. Renan says, "Had this body been taken away, or did enthusiasm, always credulous, create afterwards the group of narratives by which it is sought to establish faith in the resurrection? In the absence of opposing documents this can never be ascertained. Let us say, however, that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalene played an important part in this circumstance. Divine power of love! Sacred moments in which the passion of one possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!" Renan here insinuates that Mary Magdalene was in love with Jesus, and brooding over his death at the empty tomb, her feelings were roused to such a pitch that in her disordered fancy she actually seemed to see Jesus. Reporting to the disciples that she had seen Jesus, they believed her and so the passion of an hallucinated woman "gave to the world a resuscitated God."

Is it credible that a hard-headed man like Thomas could be convinced by the "passion of an hallucinated woman"? At the first meeting

of Jesus with his disciples Thomas was absent. When the others reported this meeting and said to him, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas informed them that he did not intend to be misled in this matter. They might be mistaken, but he proposed to safeguard himself against the possibility of a mistake, saying, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." When Jesus appeared to His disciples a few days later, Thomas being present with them, He said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." When Thomas beheld these mute but indubitable evidences that it was none other than the Lord who was present in their midst he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!"

Was Saul of Tarsus the sort of a man who could be carried away by the "passion of an hallucinated woman?" The other disciples may have been unlearned men, but that was not true in his case. He was a man unusually keen of intellect. Moreover, he was a contemporary of

Jesus, and he had the advantage of looking at the matter both from the Jewish and the Christian standpoint, yet so convinced was he that Jesus had actually risen from the dead that upon this fact he was willing to hazard his hopes of eternal salvation.

Strauss asserts that the appearances of Jesus were visionary. Visions, however, demand a certain amount of expectation. But on the part of the disciples such expectation was lacking. When, on the first day of the week, the women went to the sepulchre with the sweet spices which they had brought to anoint the body, they did not expect to find an empty tomb; instead they were concerned about who should roll away the stone that they might proceed with the work of embalming. When they announced to the disciples that they had found the tomb empty and had seen a young man sitting clothed in a white garment, who had said, "He is not here, but is risen," their story was received with doubt and incredulity, for "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." The two on the walk to Emmaus confided to the one who had joined

them, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." The death of Jesus, however, had utterly dissipated their expectations and hope gave way to abject and utter despair. Whatever expectations his disciples may have had, they did not expect that he would rise from the dead.

If the appearances of Jesus had been to a single individual or even to a small group of individuals on a single occasion, there might be some plausibility to the visionary hypothesis. But the appearances of Jesus were too numerous and in the presence of too many witnesses to admit of such a possibility. The resurrection of Jesus is better authenticated than any other event in ancient history. It is better attested than the death of Socrates or the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Jesus appeared to his disciples not once but eleven times, not to a few of the brethren only, but to all, and on one occasion to five hundred of the brethren at once. It is utterly inconceivable that so many persons should have been deceived at one and the same time.

None of the foregoing theories will account

for the empty tomb of Jesus. That the tomb was empty was admitted both by the friends and foes of Jesus. The recognition of that fact has been at the basis of practically every Jewish attack upon the Christian position from the day of the resurrection to the present time. Either Jesus arose from the dead as His disciples alleged or else his body must have been spirited away from the tomb. If the latter were the case, the body must have been taken either by the friends or foes of Jesus. Did His friends remove the body? There was no motive for them to do so. Their interest in the claims of Jesus ceased with his death. Moreover if they had been so disposed, veteran Roman soldiers were stationed at the sepulchre to prevent it. Unwittingly the enemies of Jesus, by guarding His sepulchre, had taken the best method possible for authenticating His resurrection. If then the body of Jesus was spirited away from the tomb, it must have been taken by his foes. If any one had influence with the Roman soldiers who had been stationed to guard the sepulchre, surely it was the enemies of Jesus. But did they take the body? If they had done

so, all that would have been necessary on their part, to silence forever the story of the resurrection, would have been to produce the body. But they did not produce the body. Instead, they weakly said, "While we slept,—think of it, a guard of Roman soldiers sleeping on the post of duty!—"while we slept, His disciples came by night and stole him away." The whole fabrication savors of the preposterous. However, the tomb was empty. If the body was spirited away neither by the friends nor the foes of Jesus, the logic of facts leads irresistibly to a single conclusion, viz: that He must have risen from the dead as He Himself had foretold and as His disciples afterwards declared with such positive assurance.

Stronger and more convincing even than the empty tomb in proof of the resurrection of Jesus was the amazing change in the attitude and conduct of the disciples. The death of Jesus had left them bewildered, broken in spirit, and with their confidence completely shattered. They were as sheep without a shepherd. Their hope was absolutely at an end. During the three miserable days that followed they believed

in the continued personal existence of Jesus. They believed that he would rise again in the general resurrection at the last day. But at the end of three days something happened which transformed these men from a state of absolute despair to one of jubilant faith and triumphant courage. A belief in the continued personal existence of Jesus is insufficient to account for this. There is but one adequate explanation, and that is the actual, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is the only hypothesis upon which we can account for the fact that a few weak and cowardly disciples became the spiritual conquerors of the world. On the night of the betrayal Peter followed afar off and thrice denied his Lord, but on the day of Pentecost we find him boldly charging the people with complicity in the unlawful execution of Jesus and triumphantly declaring that he had risen from the dead. A similar change took place in the other disciples, who cheerfully faced death in the advocacy of the resurrection of Jesus. It taxes our credulity beyond the breaking point to suppose that this change in attitude could have taken place if the body of Jesus was

still in the tomb, or if the broken wreck of a crucified man lingered secretly in their midst, or if there was only a spiritual resurrection without objective reality, the product of a vivid or disordered imagination. Nothing short of an actual, physical resurrection will account for the peculiar intensity of conviction with which the disciples gave witness to the triumph of Jesus over death and the grave.

What significance have the miracles of Jesus for the men of our day? Precisely the same significance which they had for those who witnessed them nineteen centuries ago. By the miracles which Jesus performed, the men of His time were enabled to pass judgment upon the claims which He made. The same holds true today. The only way by which we can judge of the claims and character of Jesus of Nazareth is by the statements contained in the writings of the New Testament. There we find recorded the words and works of Jesus. The two go together. His works supplement His words. He who could still the winds and the waves, could heal the sick, could cleanse the leper, open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the

deaf, and could even raise the dead, in truth could say, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by Me;" "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." He who by His own almighty power could perform such wonderful miracles and could triumph over death and the grave can fulfill in us the hope of everlasting life. As St. Paul expresses it in his Epistle to the Romans—Jesus Christ "who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." To Paul and the other disciples, the resurrection of Jesus was the sign and seal, declared with power, of His divine Sonship. To those who accept the witness of His miracles, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, "declared with power by the resurrection from the dead."

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